
Socialist Balderdash

by Frans Bostrom

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It makes a fellow tired to read such rubbish as is contained in the Anti-War Manifesto and Peace Program prepared by the National Committee at its May meeting and which is now being voted upon by the membership as National Referendum B, 1915. Nothing can better illustrate the preposterousness of the Socialist claim to scientificity than the average resolution, platform, or manifesto drawn up by the idiotic bunch of opportunists who, because of their skill in platitudes, have succeeded in gaining ascendancy in the national affairs of the party.

That Socialism is a scientific conclusion drawn from known sociological facts is undeniable; but that does not make the rainbow chasings of barnstorming political revivalists scientific, or even tolerably sensible.

Just think for a minute of what this piece of childishness says, this great manifesto. Let us begin with the beginning sentence: "The supreme crisis in human history is upon us." Let me ask the National Committee if this means that we are to abandon the law of Economic Determinism? We have been taught that the great epochs in history have been the useful discoveries and inventions, that the social history of mankind was a mere corollary of these industrial advancements, mere readjustments in order to make the social structure fit the needs of modern machinery. But now our national sages tell us to put the cart before the horse.

Let us read further: "European civilization is engulfed.... The future of the human race is imperiled." Does the committee mean that in this war we are to lose track of our sciences, the arts of making fire, melting iron, building houses, machines, ships, and aircrafts, or does it really believe that the world would lose anything by having all its

moss-grown institutions overthrown and destroyed? Pardon me, my opportunist comrades, for stating frankly that you are exceedingly poor stuff to make Socialists out of, if you are so devoid of optimism that you think that the world can move backward or the human race can be imperiled by anything that can happen through human agency.

1915 Utopianism.

Space forbids treating the subject in detail. Suffice it, however, to point out that after an explanation of how capitalism naturally leads to war, and a reminder of the strenuous efforts of the Socialists to prevent it, the committee admits that capitalism has created a Frankenstein that will destroy its creator and that the party has been engaged in fighting windmills. But never more. After this manifesto has been ratified, we will have a program that will settle the question. We are going to tell the governments of the world how we want the world governed. We want the United States of the world. But the ancient law of force, upon which all hitherto existing society has been based, and upon which in fact scientific Socialism is based, is to be abandoned and the decrees of the world government are to be carried out *without resort to arms*. This is pure philosophic anarchy and comes from a big heart and a small brain. Gentle persuasion will create brotherly love. The powers that be will undoubtedly listen to our advice and mend their ways, *without compulsion*. And if they don't we can point with pride to the fact that we have expostulated with them in resolutions and manifestos and thus done all that we could reasonably be expected from us. this will entitle us to the votes of all mutts.

It did not seem to strike the National Committee that if war breaks out, the organization will be paralyzed by martial law; that, as in Europe, the leaders will lose their heads and become patriotic, or their backbones and become cowards. That therefore no proposal to stop war is practical or even honest, which does not prepare the individual for the dilemma of being shot as a traitor or become a murderer of his fellows. the Quakers have that much sense.

Do we want to abolish war before we have gained our freedom? Are we to follow in the footsteps of the meek Nazarene? Or the eccentric Tolstoy? If war is one of the many evils of capitalism, why should we waste time and energy to trim the branches and leave the root untouched? *What more can we do than advise our comrades to leave the war alone and to fervently hope that as many mutts may be killed as possible in order that the standard of average intelligence may rise correspondingly?*

A Serious Situation.

While the committee indulged in hot air Quixotisms and phrase gymnastics, the party, the only organization that even attempts to do something for emancipation, is slowly but surely headed for the rocks, poorly officered, crew mutinous, and leaking in every joint. *The Socialist Party is revolutionary or it is a fraud.* It would be unreasonable to expect a National Committee, the great majority of which is composed of incorrigible opportunists, to correct the blunders of a national convention, by giving the party a program that would give it some semblance of excuse for existence; for the committee has not the constitutional power to do so, even if it were inclined, which it is not. But we might have expected that it could have elected a more capable National Secretary and have left out of the National Executive Committee the three members who from their past services have proven their incompetency for so important an office.¹ Internecine strife is perhaps inevitable in the party, but it is not so necessary that those who like to fan the flame of hatred and dissension should be given encouragement. True, their term is short, but the committee has fixed it so that Berger, the fusionist, will be elected next winter, by a membership which does not know that he and the Kaiser stand for the same thing.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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¹ Executive Secretary of the Socialist Party of America was Walter Lanfersiek of Kentucky. The NEC included Adolph Germer, James Maurer, Emil Seidel, George Goebel, and Arthur LeSueur. Germer, Maurer, and Goebel were the three returning members of the committee.